



*They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. - Jeremiah 17:8*

Dear Friends in Christ:

The most important phrase to say in a community is “thank you.” Say it often, and mean it, and today I say it to you. Thank you for the many gifts that you share with our parish and in our community.

You have heard the familiar expression “can’t see the forest for the trees.” We most often use it to describe the times in which we lose sight of the big picture, while focusing on the details. From where I sit, I actually *do* experience the blessing of being able to see the big picture of our congregation – the ministry we bring to our neighbors, the impact we have on our community, the ways that week after week we come together to celebrate our faith and praise God. This is the forest.

And I also get to wander amongst the trees. From the small shoot reaching out from its seed and finding the sunlight, to the mightiest tree, standing tall, offering sheltering love to those who need it. You are those trees, each drawing strength from our meal and showering the world with the love and grace you have come to know here. I am blessed in our congregation to see both the forest *and* the trees!

When we walk through a forest, we see the tangle of roots, how one tree is connected to another. Trees use these networks, talking to each other through their roots, passing information along. Adult trees share their sugars with young saplings, a tree at the end of its life can send its remaining resources back out to help the community. These networks, these roots of abundance, keep trees in place while freeing them to grow and share.

The theme of our upcoming annual pledge campaign this year is *Rooted in Abundance*, and we are reminded that we are a mighty forest, comprised of ancient trunks and sprightly saplings, each of us contributing our gifts to a world that needs us. As you hear the messages and stories of abundance this year, take note of how generosity spreads and widens our root structures of faith and action.

In gratitude,

Fr. George Baum